

Broadband affordability

The real cost of broadband for low
income households

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1. Introduction

As the UK cost of living crisis continues, and the evidence mounts that poorer households are being hardest hit by price rises and limited incomes, the status of home broadband as an essential household spend is under-recognised.

Reliable, affordable access to the internet at home is the key to unlocking so many other aspects of life, from health to education, shopping to socialising, and finding ways to cope with the crisis such as accessing cheaper deals on goods and services. Spending patterns show that despite not being recognised officially as a utility, along with gas, electricity, water and telephones, low income households treat home broadband as an essential spend, not a nice-to-have luxury.

Digital exclusion and data poverty are about more than digital skills and access to devices, which while critically important centre the individual as the site of exclusion. Efforts to tackle digital exclusion and data poverty also need to consider how the broadband market works.

While social tariffs are a useful addition to the market, they cannot solve the broadband affordability problem as they currently operate. Even with social tariffs, low income households spend a much greater proportion of their household income on home broadband than higher income households, often for a lower quality service. In addition, an estimated 2.4 million people on a low income are not able to access a social tariff.

Home broadband therefore needs policy attention of a different kind, and a new approach to who provides broadband and how.

2. Social tariffs

Most broadband providers now offer some sort of social tariff, a lower-cost home broadband package for households on a low income. These packages developed in response to concerns from Ofcom and broadband providers about the affordability of home connectivity.

Availability and Cost

There are now over 20 social tariff packages available, from nearly 20 different providers, and government data suggests that 99% of the country has access to a social tariff from at least one provider.¹ Currently, just one provider, BT, provides more than 85% of all social tariffs in the market.²

Prices range from £12–£20 per month. **The cheapest nationally available package is BT Home Essentials at £15/ month.** Potential savings for social tariff customers range from £180 - £250 per year, depending on the tariff.

Of the big four broadband providers – BT, Sky, TalkTalk, and Virgin Media – only TalkTalk does not currently offer a social tariff. The other three all offer low-cost “essential” packages, starting from £12 a month (Vodafone) and £12.50 (Virgin) to £15 (BT). However, **all offer lower speeds than mainstream packages**, ranging from 15 Mbps (Virgin), 36 Mbps (BT) and 38 Mbps (Vodafone).

Some of the best offers are limited due to regional disparities. For example, Community Fibre is available to anyone but only covers certain areas of London. Hyperoptics has a superfast social tariff and covers over 100 cities; however, it is not nationwide.³

¹ UK Government, 2022, *Cheaper broadband for struggling families: 14 August 2022*. GOV.UK. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cheaper-broadband-for-struggling-families-14-august-2022>

² Sweney, M. 2022, *BT asks ministers to help pay for low-cost broadband for poorest customers*, The Guardian

³ Buck, T. 2023, *Hyperoptic broadband speeds, prices, and availability APR 2023*, Fair Internet Report, <https://fairinternetreport.com/Hyperoptic>

Speed

While the costs of social tariffs are fairly consistent, and there is no overlap in price ranges between social tariffs and mainstream broadband packages, **there is large variation in internet speeds within social tariffs, and between social tariffs and regular broadband.** There will also be variation in the type of connection available – fibre or cable – which varies by geography. Areas with limited choice of social tariff may also find they cannot choose their preference of connection type, which may impact on the speeds they are able to access in future.

Speeds offered by social tariffs are in a broad range, from 15 Mbps up to 150 Mbps, though **most offer speeds around or below 50 Mbps. In comparison, Ofcom's 2022 [UK Home Broadband Performance report](#) found that the average household in the UK had an average speed of 59.4 Mbps.**⁴ The average speeds offered on social tariffs are comparable with those available on the cheapest regular tariffs, which start at around £25 per month.

The average social tariff download speed is lower than the national average but is still considered to be “superfast”: Ofcom, the EU, and UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments currently define “superfast broadband” as download speeds of at least 30 Mbps.⁵

Ofcom and the UK Government consider that a “decent” broadband connection for typical home usage is one that can deliver at least 10 Mbps, with Ofcom saying that “these speeds allow multiple users to use the internet at the same time, including web browsing, video streaming, video calling, and gaming”.⁶

⁴ Ofcom, 2022, *UK Home Broadband Performance: the performance of fixed-line broadband delivered to UK residential consumers, 2022 report*, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/244140/home-broadband-report-2022.pdf

⁵ Hutton, G. & Baker C. 2021, *Superfast broadband in the UK*, House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, no. CBP06643, <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06643/SN06643.pdf>

⁶ Ofcom, 2023, *Your right to request a decent broadband service: What you need to know*, Advice for Consumers, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/phones-telecoms-and-internet/advice-for-consumers/broadband-what-you-need-to-know>

While the highest social tariff speed is nearly double the national average speed, the lowest is only just above what the Government considers as a “basic” broadband connection.

Eligibility

Eligibility for a social tariff is generally based on receipt of means-tested benefits: Universal Credit is an indicator of eligibility for all social tariffs, while many accept other benefits such as Employment Support Allowance, Pension Credit and Income Support. Less commonly, some providers will also take account of other benefits or eligibility indicators, such as Disability Allowance, Care home residents referred by social services, and care leavers.

Only one provider, Community Fibre, has a low cost tariff that is available to anyone, not strictly a social tariff (see Appendix 1).

There has been a recent development in how people can prove eligibility. The DWP has created an automatic verification system so providers such as BT, Vodafone and Virgin Media have an instant eligibility check.⁷ While this no doubt speeds up eligibility checks, it also **opens up social tariff customers to data sharing and surveillance** that regular customers are not subject to.

Not all providers have implemented this system, and some require documents to be sent to prove eligibility. For example, Wildanet asks for verification of UC by requiring a recent council tax bill to be sent.⁸

While some providers do not require credit checks, many will carry out a credit check as part of the application process and/or require a security deposit, such as BT, which in practice is significant as over 85% of all social tariff customers are with BT.

In addition, a small number of providers, most significantly Sky, only offer their social tariff to existing customers.

⁷ UK Government, 2022, *Cheaper broadband for struggling families: 14 August 2022*. GOV.UK. Retrieved April 18, 2023, from <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cheaper-broadband-for-struggling-families-14-august-2022>

⁸ Wildanet, (n.d.), *Social Tariff*, Wildanet, <https://wildanet.com/wildanet-social-tariff/>

Take-up of social tariffs

The take-up of social tariffs is currently very low, though rising. According to Ofcom, [only 5.1%](#) of all eligible households have a social broadband tariff.⁹ This is an increase from 3.2% in August 2022, and a fourfold increase since February 2022, when take-up was just 1.3%. There is a lack of available data to determine any regional or demographic differences in take-up.

A recent [report on unclaimed benefits](#) by Policy in Practice found that approximately 5.3 million households are eligible for broadband social tariffs but are not claiming them, equating to £768 million in lost savings.¹⁰

Barriers to take-up

According to consumer choice organisation Which?, who carried out a [survey of over 2,000 people eligible for social tariffs](#), the leading reason for low take-up is a lack of awareness.¹¹ This was the case for nearly 2 out of 3 households (63%) households, who said they had never heard of social tariffs. Over half (51%) of people hearing about social tariffs for the first time said they were likely to switch, showing that simply boosting awareness could make a big difference.

Amongst those who had heard of social tariffs, the top concern is slower internet speed: nearly half (44%) said they had not signed up due to fears about slower internet speeds. The other significant barrier for eligible consumers is already being tied into a contract: 1 in 3 (32%) people aware of social tariffs cited contractual barriers. A further quarter (25%) had not signed up because they felt uninformed and didn't understand the benefits of them or how to switch providers.

⁹ Ofcom, 2023, *Affordability of Communications Services, April 2023 Update*, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/260147/2023-april-affordability-of-communications-services.pdf

¹⁰ Clegg, A., Ghelani, D., Charlesworth, Z., & Johnson, T., 2023, *Missing out: £19 billion of support goes unclaimed each year*, Policy in Practice, <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Missing-out-19-billion-of-support.pdf>

¹¹ Jooshandeh, J. 2022, *Broadband social tariffs research*, Insight Article, Which? <https://www.which.co.uk/policy-and-insight/article/broadband-social-tariffs-research-aQkOM1e5vpEG>

The eligibility gap

As well as issues of low take-up, there are many low income households that do not qualify for a social tariff.

According to Ofcom's latest [Communications Affordability Tracker](#), 3 in 10 households in the UK had difficulty affording a communications service.¹² They estimate that, in total, 8.1 million households find it difficult to afford a broadband connection, while only approximately 4.2 million are eligible for social tariffs (NB: Policy in Practice has a higher estimate of 5.3 million eligible non-claiming households).¹³

The idea of an "eligibility gap" is supported by research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), who have found that four in ten households in the poorest fifth of the population do not receive means-tested benefits such as Universal Credit, while 46% of working-age households in poverty (i.e. less than 60% of median income) are not receiving any benefits at all.¹⁴ This means that around half of the poorest households in the UK are not eligible for social tariffs.

There are two main reasons someone on low income might not be in receipt of means-tested benefits. Firstly, because they are not eligible: for example because they have savings of more than £16,000, because they are just on the wrong side of an income threshold, or because of their migration status. Secondly, they are eligible but are not claiming it. Around 23% of the poorest fifth of households (around 1.6 million people) either do not meet eligibility criteria or are eligible but not claiming.

¹² Ofcom, 2023, *Affordability of Communications Services, April 2023 Update*, https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/260147/2023-april-affordability-of-communications-services.pdf

¹³ Clegg, A., Ghelani, D., Charlesworth, Z., & Johnson, T., 2023, *Missing out: £19 billion of support goes unclaimed each year*, Policy in Practice, <https://policyinpractice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Missing-out-19-billion-of-support.pdf>

¹⁴ Schmueker, K. & Elliot, J. 2023, *On a low income, but not claiming means-tested benefits*, Briefing Paper, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/low-income-not-claiming-means-tested-benefits#:~:text=But%20a%20striking%20figure%20has,that%20is%20designed%20to%20help>

While the JRF research does not break this number down further, [Policy in Practice](#) has found that 1.25 million eligible low-income households are not claiming Universal Credit, meaning that they would benefit from a social tariff but they probably cannot apply for one.¹⁵

Pros and Cons of social tariffs

Social tariffs do go some way towards filling an important gap in the market, providing a reasonable level of service to households that cannot afford mainstream packages. Though take-up is still very low, it is increasing rapidly, and households that do receive a social tariff are overwhelmingly satisfied with it.¹⁶

Multiple barriers to take-up still exist however: lack of choice, quality of service and contractual issues.

A critical issue is the **lack of choice and consumer power**. The majority of social tariffs provide a reasonable speed, but this is not consistently the case across all providers or all social tariff packages. Although 99% of the country has access to at least one social tariff, this is far from the choice available to mainstream broadband consumers, and currently one provider (BT) serves the vast majority of the social tariff customer base.

While the average social tariff speed is considered to be superfast, it is important to recognise that this is under *current* definitions of superfast broadband. As technology and broadband infrastructure change and improve, what is available to the mainstream market and what is available to social tariff customers might diverge further, and **social tariff customers might be left behind** if providers are not required to deliver speeds that keep pace with the wider market.

Because many social tariff customers have little or no choice who their provider is, they have limited means of redress if their service is not up to scratch: there may be no alternative provider available in their area, or the customer may be locked into their package with no way of exiting before the contract ends. The best offers are not necessarily available to everyone who needs a social tariff due to regional variation in providers, and some social tariff providers also require the household to be an existing customer.

¹⁵ Clegg, A., Ghelani, D., Charlesworth, Z., & Johnson, T., 2023, *Missing out: £19 billion of support goes unclaimed each year*, Policy in Practice,

<https://policyinpractice.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Missing-out-19-billion-of-support.pdf>

¹⁶ Jooshandeh, J. 2022, *Broadband social tariffs research*, Insight Article, Which?

<https://www.which.co.uk/policy-and-insight/article/broadband-social-tariffs-research-aQkOM1e5vpEG>

Many social tariffs have flexible and appropriate terms and conditions, such as rolling monthly contracts rather than long-term commitments, a guarantee of no in-contract price rises, and no early exit fees. However others are more rigid, requiring long contracts, and some still require a credit check. Again, **social tariff customers have far less choice about the terms and conditions of their tariff due to the limited market.**

As well as low take-up, **the eligibility gap is a key concern:** it is likely that millions of households on a low income are not eligible for a social tariff, leaving them to either have no home broadband or to try to pay for mainstream tariffs from their limited income, leaving them to make impossible choices about what they can afford. While the new DWP automatic eligibility checker speeds up the application process, it also introduces a level of surveillance and privacy concerns that customers paying for mainstream tariffs are not subject to.

While the absolute financial cost of social tariffs is lower than that of mainstream alternatives, social tariffs are still relatively expensive for low-income households. The following section explores this disparity in more detail.

3. Costs of home broadband for a range of low income households

Broadband take-up in UK households has risen dramatically over the last two decades, with the number of connected households rising from 57% in 2006 (when the comparable official series began) to 96% in 2020.¹⁷ **This shift to near-universal provision, close to the levels of running water (>99%) and electricity (>99%) suggests that broadband access at home has become an essential part of household consumption.**

Although the UK has historically ranked well for overall affordability compared to other higher income developed countries, recent substantial increases in broadband prices suggest that this positive picture is under threat. **Lower-income households in particular may face significant and growing difficulties accessing what has become essential expenditure for full participation in modern life.** The table below shows recent broadband price increases:

Table 1: **Broadband price increase index**

Date range	Price increase
Apr 19 – Apr 20	7.61%
Apr 20 – Apr 21	2.04%
Apr 21 – Apr 22	4.70%
Apr 22 – Apr 23	7.50%
Apr 23 – Apr 24	11.03%

Sources: ONS CPI, 2019-2022; own calculations from published price increases, 2022-24

¹⁷ ONS (7 August 2020), "Internet access".

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020>

How much do different households spend on broadband?

Table 2 estimates the expenditures on broadband for households, ranked by income decile from poorest to richest 10%. These estimates are based on Ofcom's own estimates for spending, adjusted for subsequent price inflation, and ONS figures for household incomes and spending, all for the year to April 2023.

Table 2: Households by income decile, monthly broadband spend, financial year ending April 2023

Decile	Lowest	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	Median
Income Before Housing Costs	£1,083	£1,886	£2,388	£2,860	£3,259	£3,830	£4,376	£5,168	£6,214	£11,483	£3,545
Housing costs	(£428)	(£387)	(£462)	(£512)	(£602)	(£766)	(£786)	(£826)	(£1,172)	(£1,590)	(£753)
Income After Housing Costs (AHC)	£654	£1,498	£1,926	£2,348	£2,657	£3,064	£3,591	£4,342	£5,041	£9,894	£2,792
Broadband spend	£31.00	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60	£35.60
% of AHC	4.7%	2.4%	1.8%	1.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.0%	0.8%	0.7%	0.4%	1.3%

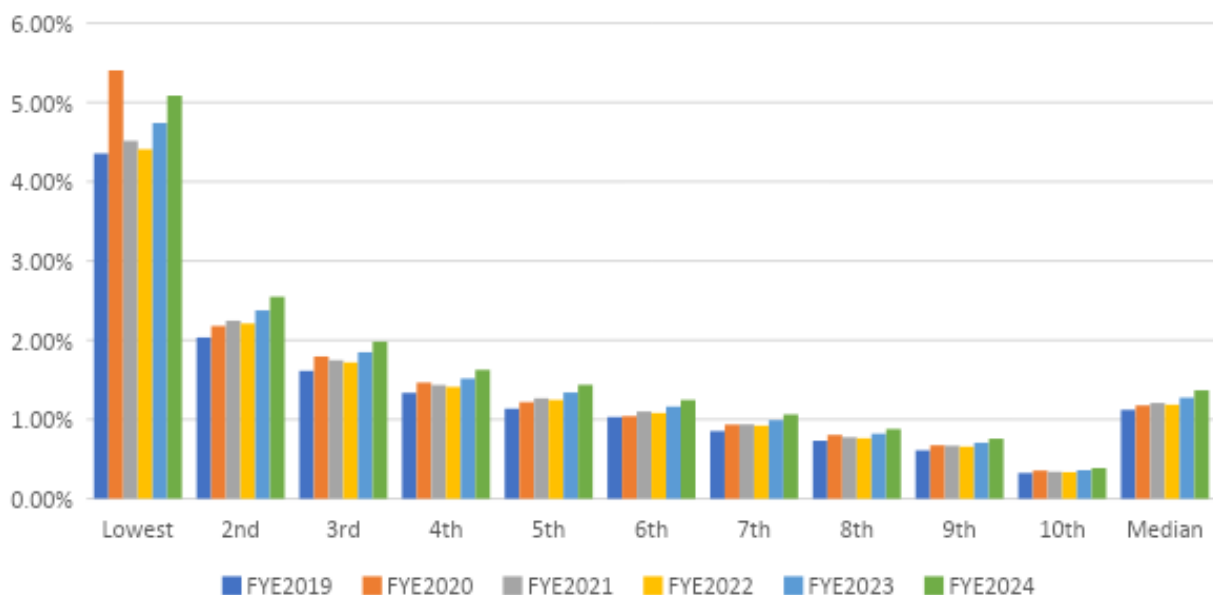
Sources: ONS Effects of Taxes and Benefits (2022); ONS Family Spending (2022); income forecasts for financial year to April 2023 from Office for Budget Responsibility Economic and Fiscal Outlook (March 2023).

Taken as a share of income, **broadband is relatively much more expensive for lower-income households**, representing a significantly higher proportion of their disposable income. The poorest households spend 4.7% of their disposable income on broadband, just over 3.5 times more than the proportion spent by a household on a median income, and 11.75 times that spent by a household in the richest decile. The fact that despite this poorer households are still spending money on broadband indicates that it is an essential household item, not a luxury choice. Taken together with the essential nature of broadband for completing essential tasks related to health and wellbeing, poorer households are essentially paying a premium to access the Internet.

Broadband price changes over time

This disparity in the relative cost of broadband for different households has not come about purely since 2023 broadband price rises. As shown in Figure 1, below, poorer households have consistently paid more for broadband than the median household since 2019.

Figure 1: Broadband expenditure share of income after housing costs by income decile, 2019 – 2024 (forecast)



The contrast between expenditure shares of household income for poorer and richer deciles is immediately apparent, as is the steady increase in household expenditure

shares over the six years covered (including the forecast period). This reflects the status of broadband expenditure as an essential service for modern living, with poorer households compelled to devote more of their disposable income to essential goods and services than those with more disposable income, in a manner analogous to food or energy.¹⁸

In general, there has been an upwards shift in the typical share of broadband spending by households. This shift is more pronounced for poorer households than it has been for wealthier households, with the poorest experiencing a 0.38% rise in broadband expenditure, compared to a 0.04% rise for the richest: nine and a half times greater.

Table 3 shows this shift for the whole period (excluding the forecast financial year ending in April 2024).

Table 3: Shift in share of broadband expenditure by income decile, FYE2019 – FYE2023

Lowest decile	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	Median
0.38%	0.34%	0.24%	0.18%	0.20%	0.13%	0.14%	0.09%	0.10%	0.04%	0.15%

Affordability for the lowest income households: case studies

Drawing on Ofcom's 2020 work,¹⁹ we have also modelled six sample households that are likely to spend a substantial share of their income on broadband, when the announced price increases and the benefits uprating for April 2023 have come into effect. These are:

- median income households
- households in receipt of out-of-work Universal Credit (based on uprating of benefits from April 2023)
- households in receipt of part-time working Universal Credit (based on uprating of benefits from April 2023)
- single-person households receiving UC and standard Personal Independence Payments (based on uprating of benefits from April 2023)

¹⁸ This effect is known as Engel's Law, and has proved extremely robust since first being observed in 1857.

¹⁹ Ofcom (15 February 2022), *Affordability of Communications Services: Summary of research findings and update on availability and take-up of broadband social tariffs*, p.12.

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/232522/Affordability-of-Communications-Services.pdf

- single-person households receiving State Pension and Pension Credit (based on uprating of benefits from April 2023)
- single person low income household not eligible for social tariffs, or not claiming benefits, based on Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023)²⁰

We have assumed throughout that the broadband expenditure will be typical for the income decile, mirroring the method in Ofcom (2020). For the social tariff, we have taken a simple average of the social tariffs listed in Appendix 1. In contrast to the decile results, these specific households should be taken as case studies, or examples of the costs that could be faced by different households given broadband price increases, rather than “average” or “typical” representatives of the population. For a full breakdown of costs, see Appendix 2.

The broadband price increases announced in April 2023 are, on these estimates, likely to increase the burden of broadband expenditure, even with benefits uprating from April 2023.

Table 4: Share of household income spent by example households on broadband, 2023 upratings and broadband costs included (April 2023 – April 2024)

Household type	Standard tariff	Social tariff
	Median	1.42%
Out-of-work UC claimant	9.34%	4.61%
Part-time UC claimant	4.01%	1.98%
Individual in receipt of disability benefits	7.42%	3.67%
State pension and pension credits	4.28%	2.11%
Low income household not eligible for benefits	5.26%	2.60% (most would not be eligible for social tariff)

²⁰ Katie Scheumaker, Joseph Elliot (19 January 2023), “On a low income but not claiming means-tested benefits”, Joseph Rowntree Foundation. <https://www.irf.org.uk/report/low-income-not-claiming-means-tested-benefits>

Every one of the different types of low income households we have modelled is spending a greater proportion of their household income on broadband than the median household, even when on a social tariff. Those dependent on Universal Credit, PIP or the Pension Credit are likely to face the most severe difficulties in accessing broadband, given price rises over the last two years. For those wholly dependent on non-pension benefits in particular, the costs are likely to prove prohibitive. The uprating of benefit levels in April 2023 has not been sufficient to bridge the gap in affordability for these households.

However, with social tariffs only presently available to those in receipt of benefits, the 2.42m low income households that Joseph Rowntree have estimated are **unable to receive benefits (typically because they hold savings worth more than £16,000) are being pushed into significant expenditures on broadband,** and in contrast to the other groups shown here, their expenditure share is likely to be increasing. Even if they were able to access a social tariff this would still represent a higher proportion of their household income than the median household pays for broadband.

Based on the modelling here, access to a social tariff broadband service almost halves the cost of broadband for low income households, expressed as a share of disposable income. Aside from increasing knowledge of these services (highlighted by Ofcom as an issue for affordability),²¹ **expanding the provision of social tariffs to households not otherwise able to receive benefits would significantly improve affordability for a large number of low-income households,** though it would still not put them on a par with the median household.

²¹ Ofcom (April 2023), *Affordability of Communications Services: April 2023 update*, p.3.
https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/260147/2023-april-affordability-of-communications-services.pdf

4. Policy implications and next steps

Social tariffs are a relatively new addition to the broadband market, and as such cannot be expected to be working perfectly straight away.

Policy changes to improve them proposed by other organisations include:

- increasing customer awareness of social tariffs
- scrapping VAT on social tariffs
- introducing more consistency in the social tariff market through creating industry standards
- expand eligibility criteria to cover more customers
- expand automatic enrollment to cover more households that could benefit
- reduce barriers to switching through consistency of terms and conditions such as zero early exit penalties and easier switching from mainstream to social tariffs.

These could improve the take-up, availability and functioning of social tariffs, and should be supported. However, **unless social tariffs, or the broadband market more widely, undergo much more significant redesign, they are unlikely to entirely solve the affordability challenge for home broadband.** The wicked problems that underpin low benefit take-up, or the extremely low levels of social security benefits, are well outside the scope of what social tariffs on their own could address. The profit-driven, private sector nature of the commercial broadband market, in which shareholder benefit is the priority, will always create barriers to more households being able to access more affordable broadband.

Our affordability modelling demonstrates that **the market does not work for low income households:** they spend proportionately more of their income on broadband, and **while spending patterns indicate it is an essential not discretionary spend, broadband does not benefit from the same consumer choice or rights as utilities or other essentials such as food.** Regardless of benefit type, **all of the types of low income households we looked at pay proportionately more on broadband,** even when they are on a social tariff. Over 2.4 million people on a low income probably cannot access a social tariff, and even if they could they would still be paying proportionately more.



Lower income households that need cheaper products represent a less attractive segment of the market than customers who can pay full price and might also buy add-ons such as television packages or mobile phone contracts: the **commercial motivation to create more and better affordable products is therefore limited.**

The home broadband market therefore needs re-imagining, to look to expand what is on offer and ensure affordability for all households. This is likely to necessitate a more diverse provider base, and potentially non-profit provision that is not driven by maximising revenue, or that provides sub-standard cheaper products solely driven by 'charitable' or CSR motivations.

Appendix 1: List of Social Tariffs

Table 1. Social tariffs on offer, price, speed and eligibility criteria. Correct as of May 2023

Broadband provider	Price	Speed	Eligibility criteria	Additional factors
BT Home Essentials ⁺	£15 per month	36 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees
BT Home Essentials 2 ⁺	£20 per month	67 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees
Sky Broadband Basics ⁺	£20 per month	36 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS (Must be existing customer)	No early exit fees, free set up
Virgin Media Essential Broadband ⁺	£12.50 per month	15 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees, free set up
Virgin Media Essential Broadband Plus ⁺	£20 per month	54 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees
Vodafone Essentials Broadband ⁺	£12 per month	38 Mbps	UC, JSA, ESA, PC, IS, REA, PIP, DA	No in-contract price increase, no early exit fees



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TalkTalk	NA	35 Mbps	Free connections through Job Centre	No social tariff offered - a small amount of free connections.
Country Connect Social Tariff	£15 per month	50 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees. Newport, Wales only.
G.Network Essential Fibre Broadband	£15 per month	50 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	12 month minimum contract term. Parts of London only.
Grayshott Gigabit Connect	£20 per month	100 Mbps	UC (zero earnings), I-ESA, IS, PC, PIP, AA, CHr, CL	30 days rolling contract, free set up. East Hampshire & Surrey Hills only.
Hyperoptic Fair Fibre 50	£15 per month	50 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS, PIP, HB, AA, CLs	Monthly rolling contract, free set up. Available in c. 100 cities and towns in England.
Hyperoptic Fair Fibre 150	£20 per month	150 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS, PIP, HB, AA, CLs	Monthly rolling contract. Available in c. 100 cities and towns in England.
KCOM Full Fibre Flex	£14.99 per month	30 Mbps	UC (zero earnings), I-ESA, JSA, PC, IS, PIP, HB, AA, CHr, CLs	30 days rolling contract. Hull, East Yorkshire & North Lincolnshire only.
Lightning Fibre Social Tariff	£15 per month	50 Mbps	UC, JSA, ESA, PC, IS, PIP, AA, CLs	No in-contract price increase, free cancellation. East Sussex only.



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NOW Broadband Basics⁺	£20 per month	36 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees
Wildanet Helping Hand Social Tariff	£20 per month	30-100 Mbps	UC	No in-contract price increase, free set up. Cornwall & SW England only.
WightFibre Essential Broadband	£16.50 per month	100 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	30 days rolling contract, free cancellation, £9.95 set up. Isle of Wight only.
4th Utility Social Tariff	£13.99 per month	30 Mbps	UC, JSA, ESA, IS	30 days rolling contract, no in-contract price increase. Only available in select new build developments.
Lothian Broadband Social Tariff	£19.99 per month	100 Mbps	Means-tested benefits	24 month contract. East Lothian only.
Truespeed Basic	£20 per month	30 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS, HB, PIP, AA, CLs	Monthly rolling contract. SW England only.
Community Fibre Essential	£12.50 per month	20 Mbps	Open to all	£14.50pm after initial 12 month contract. London only.

EE Basics ⁺	£12 per month	Up to 25 Mbps	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No early exit fees
SMARTY Mobile Social Tariff ⁺	£12 per month	Unlimited data 5G	UC, I-JSA, I-ESA, PC, IS	No annual price rises, flexible 1 month plan
VOXI For Now ⁺	£10 per month	5G	UC, JSA, ESA, DA, PIP	Unlimited data for 6 months

⁺ Denotes an offer that is available nationwide.

Eligibility criteria key:

Universal Credit (UC), Income-based Job Seekers Allowance (I-JSA), Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (I-ESA), Pension Credit (PC) and Income Support (IS). Personal Independence Payments (PIP), Reduced Earnings Allowance (REA), Disability Allowance (DA), Attendance Allowance (AA), Care Home residents (CHR) who are referred via social services, Care Leavers support (CL), Housing Benefit (HB)

Appendix 2: Broadband affordability by household type

Effects on example households, 2022 payments and broadband costs included (April 2022-April 2023)

Household	Median	Out-of-work UC claimant		Part-time UC claimant		Individual in receipt of disability benefits		State pension and pension credits		Low income household not eligible for benefits	
		Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social
<i>Broadband tariff type</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Standard</i>	<i>Social</i>
Disposable income, after housing costs	2,619	335	335	781	781	421	421	730	730	610	610
Estimated broadband spend	35.00	31.00	16.50	31.00	16.50	31.00	16.50	31.00	16.50	31.00	16.50
Share of income	1.34%	9.26%	4.93%	3.97%	2.11%	7.36%	3.92%	4.24%	2.26%	5.08%	2.70%

NB most low income households not eligible for benefits will not be able to access a social tariff

Effects on example households, 2023 upratings and broadband costs included (April 2023-April 2024)

Household	Median	Out-of-work UC claimant		Part-time UC claimant		Individual in receipt of disability benefits		State pension and pension credits		Low income household not eligible for benefits	
		Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social
Broadband tariff type	Standard	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social	Standard	Social
Disposable income, after housing costs	2,792	369	369	859	859	464	464	804	804	654	654
Estimated broadband spend	39.54	34.43	17.00	34.43	17.00	34.43	17.00	34.43	17.00	34.43	17.00
Share of income	1.42%	9.34%	4.61%	4.01%	1.98%	7.42%	3.67%	4.28%	2.11%	5.26%	2.60%

NB most low income households not eligible for benefits will not be able to access a social tariff



Population sizes:

	Total claimants	Share of all individuals
Universal Credit claimants, not in work	3,500,000	5.2%
Universal Credit claimants, in work	2,000,000	3.0%
Personal Independence Payment recipients	2,774,000	4.1%
Pension Credit claimants	1,470,000	2.2%

Sources: Department for Work and Pensions (Feb 2023)



For more information

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